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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: BRV EXPELS HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH DIRECTOR

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On the evening of September 18, the BRV expelled Jose Miguel Vivanco, the Americas Director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), on the grounds of allegedly involving himself illegally in the internal affairs of Venezuela, attacking its democratic institutions, and violating the Venezuelan Constitution. Vivanco held a Caracas press conference earlier the same day to launch a critical report of the Chavez administration's human rights record. The MFA also issued a communique announcing the expulsion which sought to tie Vivanco to the United States, claiming that the BRV was acting to defend against "aggressions" linked to and funded by the USG. Amcit Daniel Wilkinson, Vivanco's assistant, was included in the expulsion order. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The BRV expulsion order came hours after Vivanco, a Chilean, publicly presented a critical 266-page report titled "A Decade of Chavez: Political Intolerance and Lost Opportunities for the Progress of Human Rights in Venezuela" to a group including representatives from more than seventy countries. Asserting a "waste of a historic opportunity," the report attacked the BRV's efforts to contain the opposition, consolidate power, and weaken democratic institutions. In the text, HRW questioned Chavez's decision in 2004 to alter the composition of the Supreme Court, calling it the "most grave violation" of rights in Venezuela since the failed coup attempt in 2002. According to Foreign Minister Maduro's statements to the local press, Vivanco and Wilkinson were driven to the airport and boarded the first flight out of Caracas.

¶3. (SBU) The pro-government press immediately drew connections between Vivanco and the alleged plot to overthrow Chavez. On September 19, the pro-government daily tabloid Diario VEA reported on its front page that Vivanco is a "known agent" of an unspecified US intelligence agency who entered Venezuela illegally. Opposition leaning media criticized the government's actions and highlighted HRW's independence from any government.

¶4. (C) Comment: The BRV has long been sensitive to international criticism, but the expulsion of Vivanco and Wilkinson -- and the speed with which the order was issued and executed -- highlights the BRV's ever increasing sensitivity and intolerance to any critique of the President or the Bolivarian revolution. End Comment.
CAULFIELD